Using Flexible e-Commerce to Boost Sales and Improve Customer Support

How Plimus helps Slitherine Ltd. and Matrix Games take advantage and stay on top of a competitive market.

Introduction

Slitherine Ltd. and Matrix Games are video game publishers that specialize in strategy and war games such as Field of Glory, Close Combat, War in the East and many others. Both develop for a growing gaming audience of currently 200,000 registered users who are a very close and connected community.

Slitherine is a privately funded company operating in the entertainment business, publishing and developing videogames. Its mission is to deliver history-based products to the widest possible audience.

Matrix Games has been in business for more than eight years, continuing to grow its customer base and employees each year. It currently leads the computer war game sector in innovation, customer satisfaction and media recognition. In late 2010, Matrix Games and Slitherine merged to create the world's largest war gaming specialist publisher, with more than a 150 game portfolio combined.

After the merger, the companies transferred their combined online game channels to the Plimus, Inc. platform. Enjoying a 20 percent growth rate the companies attribute their success to a strong focus on customer service and the community of gamers who play their games and a constant flow of new titles and updates to older ones which creates more value over time and more new customers.

Challenges

- **Reliable physical and digital product delivery:** Slitherine and Matrix want to sell digital download and physical boxed versions of their popular games.
- **Customer management:** Customers need to be able to create personal accounts, which allow them to keep track of their games and receive special offers.
- **Reseller capabilities:** Resellers need a destination where they can purchase boxed versions of Slitherine and Matrix games at a discount.

Looking For a New Solution

Rather than a simple download portal, Slitherine and Matrix needed a unique solution that combined the concepts of a customer-facing store that offered games in digital and physical formats with a dealer store where Matrix resellers can purchase boxed games at a discount. "We chase a niche, interested in strategy, history and war gaming, and we do it through innovation in distribution and community management," says Marco Minoli, marketing director at Slitherine. "Since the start, both companies have tried to expand the audience and increase the reach of the product through new distribution models, new gaming platforms and a careful attention to our customers' needs."

Though Plimus had not built such a comprehensive solution at the time, Siltherine and Matrix quickly saw the potential in working with the e-Commerce leader. "We were looking at all possible

solutions and we thought it was good to start discussion with a potential partner that was willing to develop a project together. Companies with 'closed packages' weren't of interest to us; we found that Plimus was open to discussions."

Plimus: Problem Solvers

At the time, Slitherine and Matrix certainly had their choice of e-Commerce platforms to choose from, but what sold them about Plimus was the platform's flexibility, Minoli states. "Because we innovate so much in the way we try to deeply connect with the customers, we need a partner that is able to help us find new ways to improve the service."

While impressed by the flexibility offered by the Plimus e-Commerce platform, Slitherine and Matrix also were swayed by Plimus' business model and attention to detail – making for a very powerful combination. "Project management was set in a very professional way," says Minoli. "The terms and conditions presented an improvement compared to the past, and the platform is so open and flexible where the sky is the limit in terms of evolution and improvements in the future."

Growing Revenue and Beyond

During the development phase, Plimus consulted with Slitherine and Matrix to develop the solution together and offered constructive feedback in order to expand the gaming studios' distribution level in new directions. Once launched, Slitherine and Matrix quickly realized the potential of the powerful new store, increasing sales by 15 percent in terms of number of orders and turnover in the first month – an increase largely due "to the ease of the new login and registration process that we created together," adds Minoli. "We are now working on a number of new solutions and are excited about new options the platform provides."

As market leaders, Slitherine and Matrix feel a strong responsibility in regards to growing their market and reaching for new audiences. Additionally, expanding to new gaming platforms and developing new e-Business solutions, all while connecting to their customers and keeping them happy. "We see the partnership with Plimus being a contest engagement to find these solutions to grow the market and make it better place to come and buy games," Minoli expresses.

"We are positive that Plimus is the right partner to do this and we are able to invest in this relationship as much as Plimus has invested in the relationship with us."

Hello, Goodbye - Online shopping and abandoned carts.

According to KISSMetric's nifty shopping cart abandonment infographic, [**Edit:** original embedded link points to http://blog.kissmetrics.com/shopping-cart-abandonment/?wide=1] e-commerce sales totaled $25 billion in 2010. More surprisingly, 88% of consumers have completely abandoned an online shopping cart without completing a transaction. They don't include figures about how often shopping carts are abandoned in brick and mortar stores but I'm sure you'd bet your rent money that it's considerably lower. Why? Blame the very same convenience that makes online purchasing quick and easy.

One obvious advantage brick and mortar stores have over online retailers is the customer's ability to inspect the product up close and in person. By the time customers get to the cash register, they are essentially committed to buying the product. Barring a forgotten wallet or a lack of funds, rarely do you see customers ditch their goods at the checkout and walk away. Since very little time was committed to the purchase, it is extremely easy to simply ditch a cart in the online world. People can just as easily open up a new browser tab and look elsewhere for a better deal or for a retailer that provides a better buying experience.

There are ways to improve this experience, ranging from major site overhauls to a simple removal or addition of a field in a checkout form. Above all, customers must be sufficiently confident about the product they will purchase - a confidence that can be built surprisingly easily.

When customers are presented with large, clear images coupled with loads of information, reviews, ratings, and other important information they need to make a purchase, they will head to the checkout page confidently and they are much less likely to abandon their cart. Inevitably, some customers will abandon their cart to rummage the net for a better deal but price isn't usually the deal breaker for confident customers. Zappos, for example, doesn't always have the best prices but they do provide a top-notch buying experience and customer support - and they're certainly not struggling to make a buck.

At the checkout page, customers are essentially faced with a decision whether or not to commit to something. Anything that reduces the anxiety about making that commitment will increase the chances the customer will continue with the purchase. Displaying payment options, support and contact information, and security tags in plain view will reassure customers. It's important to note, also, that customers are more likely to make a subscription purchase if they are presented with clear instructions on how to cancel. Once they're sure they can cancel painlessly, they will be more likely to go ahead and subscribe. Even seemingly minor things such as removing unnecessary entry fields or reducing the number of steps a customer is required to go through will improve your chances of closing the sale.

You know your own customers better than anyone and you should know what they think of your buying experience. You should also ask yourself what you think about your buying experience. Are you convinced that you're presenting the optimal experience to your customers? Would you buy a product from your store? Think about those things and always remember that it is absurdly easier to walk away from an online store than a brick and mortar one. Still, brick and mortar stores would rather chase down empty carts in the parking lot than full carts left behind in the store. As an online

retailer, you don't have to put the items back on the shelf but it hurts just the same. These experiences are what drove our development of the Plimus *BuyAnyware*™ API and the one click shopping experience is can deliver for our vendors. Experience shows this capability, along our customizable order pages, make for increased conversions and sales.